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# Correlates of Partner Violence and Health among Migrant Women in Germany: Results of Comparable Analyses of Quantitative Survey Data

*Monika Schröttle and Nadia Khelaifat*

## Introduction

Although partner violence<sup>1</sup> has elicited studies world-wide, relatively few have examined partner violence among migrants and their descendants or specific risk factors in such violence (see chapter by Condon/Lesn /Schr ttle in this Reader). Furthermore, whilst violence and its health impacts have been a focus for research in many countries (also through the DHS survey programme, see Hindin/Kishor/Ansara 2008), there has been little national level research on such relationships in Europe (Martinez, Schr ttle et al. 2006a). There is thus substantial knowledge internationally about the relevant *risk factors/correlates*<sup>2</sup>, but, given the lack of quantitative survey data allowing such analysis, the potential differences between population groups have as yet received little attention (Schr ttle and Khelaifat 2008; see chapter by Romito et al. in this volume). This article is based on the results and secondary analyses of the first national representative survey on violence against women in Germany (Schr ttle and M ller 2004). It examines correlates of partner violence of i) Turkish origin women and ii) women from the former Soviet Union who have migrated to Germany, and compares the data to that of indigenous German women.<sup>3</sup> It partly distinguishes Turkish migrant women of the first and second migrant generation, and, furthermore, it dis-

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- 1 We use the term ‘partner violence’ here interchangeably with domestic violence and abuse.
  - 2 Risk factors and correlates will be used interchangeably: a risk factor or correlate is here interpreted as something that is associated with, or correlates with, a woman’s exposure to violence.
  - 3 For this chapter the terms migrant women, Turkish origin and women from the former SU are used instead of the term ‘ethnic minority women’ as neither the women from Turkey are related to (only) one ethnic group nor do the women who have migrated from the former SU to Germany; many of the latter have German origins related to their ancestors but were socialized in the countries of the former SU. The term ‘migration background’ (Migrations-hintergrund in German) is a defining criterion of German official statistics to describe a population composed of migrants and their descendants since 1950 and is used here, because it widens the perspective from men/women who have migrated themselves to their descendants and next generations.

tinguishes different forms, levels and patterns of violence. This type of information is crucial for a better understanding of the specific risks of partner violence for migrant and ethnic minority women.

Migrants born in Turkey or in countries of the former Soviet Union constitute the largest migrant groups in Germany. While the Turkish migration flow began under the ‘Gastarbeiter’ (guest worker) scheme in the 1950s, the flow from the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries, often repatriates of German descent, began much later, in the 1990s (Münz and Ulrich 2000; Krobisch and Heckmann 2008). There is now a substantial population of people born in Germany whose parents or grandparents were born in Turkey. These, and their migrant parents, whose values and customs are often labelled as ‘non German’, have been in the spotlight in widespread debate on issues linked to integration. Such debate is shaped by aggressive anti-Islamic rhetoric against Turkish migrants, who are accused of not being willing to integrate into German society. Assumptions about ‘traditional’ gender relationships as well as violence against women (and girls) in these communities are being used for anti-immigration-politics. Yet this debate lacks attention to internal differences, thereby contributing to a collective prejudice against all Turkish migrants and to all migrants associated with Muslim religions.

The examination of quantitative data, despite several limitations (see Condon/Lesné/Schröttle in this Reader), can contribute to more detailed identification and differentiation of women affected by violence and thus make suggestions for appropriate intervention, support and prevention programmes tailored to the migrant women’s specific needs. Although higher rates and more serious levels of partner violence particularly against Turkish origin women were found in the German VAW prevalence survey, it is important not to stigmatise the whole (Turkish) migrant community as being more oppressive towards women, since partner violence is also a major problem among the German origin majority and other migrant groups.

## Data used for the study

The following results are based on secondary analyses of the first large-scale representative study on violence against women in Germany. The original study was conducted in 2003 on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and was published under the title ‘*Life situation, safety and health of women in Germany*’ (Schröttle and Müller 2004). It included survey data of more than 10,000 randomly selected

women aged between 16 and 85 who were living in German households and had different ethnic origins. While in the main study women were interviewed in German, in additional samples, randomly selected women with a migration background, not fluently speaking German, were interviewed in both Turkish and Russian.<sup>4</sup> The samples for all age groups included 501 interviews with women who migrated from former countries of the Soviet Union, 371 interviews with women of Turkish origin and 8,699 interviews with indigenous German women. The ethnic origin of the interviewees was determined by the country of birth of both parents, and, as a subordinate criterion, by the citizenship of the interviewee. Therefore, migrants of first and second generations were included and third generation migrants only when they did not (yet) hold German citizenships. All interviewees were chosen from a representative community sample, which guarantees high quality and representativeness of the sample. Overall, the original study found that one in four women of the entire study population had experienced at least one case of physical and/or sexual assault by their current and/or former partners. Most violence was found to be domestic violence perpetrated by current or former intimate partners in their own homes (Schröttle and Müller 2004).

The study '*Health – violence – migration*' (Schröttle and Khelaifat 2008) was a secondary analysis of the data from the national prevalence study and examined the connections between health, migration background, and violence. It aimed at finding out i) whether, and to what extent there was a difference in the current health of women with and without migration backgrounds, ii) what factors could cause difference, and iii) how violence, discrimination and social imbalances may have an influence on women's health. The initial study analyses of the data had found increased prevalence rates of partner violence among women with a Turkish migration background in particular; furthermore, research findings of the German and other national prevalence data show a general relationship between violence and negative health consequences (Martinez, Schröttle et al. 2006b). This secondary analysis included: interviews with 8,023 indigenous German women, 368 women of Turkish origin and 475 women from former Soviet countries, aged between 16 and 75 years.<sup>5</sup> This analysis was supplemented by a further study

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4 The Turkish and Russian interviews were conducted using translated questionnaires and face-to-face-interviews with additional (written) self-completion questionnaires on childhood and partner violence. All interviewers were female, intensively trained for the interviews and most of them had a migration background themselves and could conduct the interviews in their mother tongue. That was an important precondition for reaching more migrant women to make them feel comfortable and confidence.

5 The case numbers/sample sizes differ slightly between individual secondary analyses/studies, because either different age groups or only subsamples of women with current or previous partner were included; furthermore definitions of "migration background" differed.

into the levels of severity, patterns, risk factors and consequences of partner violence (Schröttle and Ansorge 2009), which concentrated on the entire survey population and included a few additional analyses on migrant women.

The correlates of partner violence among Turkish women were examined in another secondary analysis within a Masters Thesis (Khelaifat 2007).<sup>6</sup> A distinction was made between first and second migrant generations. Here, the overall objective was to explore correlates of partner lifetime violence among Turkish origin women to find out “high risk groups” and investigate possible differences between the first and second generation. It was based on 310 Turkish women under the age of 60 years who had been identified to have been in at least one partnership, 78% of whom were of the first migrant generation.

## Prevalence, severity levels and patterns of partner violence

Although the majority of (severely) abused women in Germany do not have a migration background, in the German study, migrant women of Turkish origin, by comparison, reported violence at the hands of their partners more often, and it was more severe and more frequent than violence reported by women of German origin and women from the former Soviet Union (Schröttle and Ansorge 2009). Turkish origin women in this study were affected most frequently and most seriously by physical and/or sexual partner violence.

Table 1 shows that with respect to *current and/or former partners*, women of Turkish origin reported slightly higher rates of physical and/or sexual violence, but with respect to the *current* partner, there was twice the rate of at least one act of physical and/or sexual violence (see Table 1).

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6 The data analysis included a sample description at the bivariate level using chi-square tests. Furthermore crude and stratified odds ratios were calculated. In the study, different from the other studies, migrant status was used. The migrant status was based on two variables: ‘country of birth’ and ‘country, where a woman had mostly grown up until the age of 16’. Ergo when a woman was born in Germany and had also grown up in Germany she was considered to belong to the second generation, while women who were born in Turkey and had either grown up in Turkey, Germany, or another country were considered to belong to the first generation.

*Table 1:* Prevalence of partner violence in the sample groups by comparison based on women below 75 years of age

	Origin of respondents		
	German Origin	Turkish Origin	Former USSR
<b>Partner violence</b>			
At least one act of physical and/or sexual violence by current and/or <i>previous</i> partners*	26%	37%	27%
At least one act of physical and/or sexual violence by <i>current</i> partner**	13%	29%	16%
<i>Sexual</i> abuse by current partner **	1%	5%	3%
More severe forms of <i>psychological</i> abuse by current partner (with and without other forms of violence)**	16%	39%	30%
<i>Patterns</i> of severe forms of <i>psychological</i> violence without physical/sexual violence	10%	21%	20%
<i>Patterns</i> of severe domestic physical/ sexual/psychological abuse by current partner (more frequent acts and regularly in combination with severe psychological violence)	5%	18%	9%

\* Related to women who have a current and/or former relationship

\*\* Related to women who have a current partner

(sources: Schröttle and Khelaifat 2008; Schröttle and Ansorge 2009)

The detailed analysis of physical, sexual and psychological partner violence prevalence highlighted that women of Turkish origin are not only more frequently but also more severely affected by physical, sexual and psychological abuse by their current partner. One in six Turkish origin women (18%) had reported patterns of severe physical, psychological and partly sexual violence by the current partner in comparison with 5–9% of women from the other groups. Furthermore, both groups of migrant women had reported levels of severe *psychological* violence through current partners which were twice as high as those reported by women of German origin (see Table 1). This suggests that, as far as psychological abuse is concerned, not ethnicity but the consequences of migration and the accompanying social tensions and strains on gender roles may have an important role in amplifying the risk of violence.

With respect to violence experienced through different perpetrator groups, including violence *inside and outside* the domestic context, women from former Soviet countries – irrespective of victim-perpetrator relationships – more frequently encountered sexual abuse (18% vs. 12–13% in the other groups, see Table 2, second line). Contrary to this, indigenous German women reported sexual harassment more frequently than women with a mi-

gration background (61% vs. 51–54% of migrant women; see Table 2). Psychological and physical violence in various areas of life, committed inside and outside the main partner relationship, had been experienced by all groups to the same extent, or with no significant (or distinctive) differences. However, both migrant groups had faced significantly higher rates of *discrimination* from their social environment than German origin women. More than one in five women with a migration background stated that they had experienced disadvantage or mistreatment due to their sex, age or ethnic origin, compared with less than one in ten women of German origin (see Table 2).

Table 2: Prevalence of violence through all perpetrators in the sample groups by comparison based on women below 75 years of age

	Origin of respondents		
	German Origin	Turkish Origin	Former USSR
Violence – all perpetrators			
Physical abuse – irrespective of victim-perpetrator relationship	38%	45%	40%
Sexual abuse (only criminal offences)	13%	12%	18%
Sexual harassment	61%	51%	54%
Psychological abuse – irrespective of victim-perpetrator relationship	42%	44%	45%
Discrimination based on sex, age or ethnic background	9%	23%	21%

(sources: Schröttle and Khelaifāt 2008; Schröttle and Ansorge 2009)

It is important to include data of the different types, severity levels and patterns of violence within and outside the domestic context for a better understanding of the lived situation of migrant and ethnic minority women (within national and social contexts). The German data shows a very high prevalence of psychological violence through partners of both migrant women groups. Women of Turkish origin, in particular, experienced patterns of severe abuse (physical, psychological and sexual violence) by their current partners to a significantly higher extent than other groups in this study. Yet the study also shows that the majority of women with and without migration background *were not* affected by any form of violence through partners. Thus, simplified stigmatisation of specific groups of ethnic minority women due to abusive partner relationships cannot be confirmed by the existing empirical data. The results demonstrate that violence against migrant women is not only found in the domestic context but also in other life settings, and social discrimination also contributes to the victimisation of these women. Some migrant women were victimised through specific forms of violence (e.g. sexual violence)

outside the domestic context, and this could be due to vulnerable working conditions and isolation which might lead to higher risks. The analyses highlight that the victimisation of migrant women and German origin women might differ considerably.

## Correlates and risk factors for partner violence

Understanding the causes of partner violence is crucial for its prevention. Partner violence is considered to be ‘entirely a product of its social context’ (Jewkes 2002: 1423). Partner violence is understood to be the result of ‘interplay of personal, situational and cultural factors...’ (Krug et al. 2002: 97; Schröttle 1999). However, systematic research on risk and protective factors in partner violence is limited; most studies are of cross-sectional design and only examine a restricted number of predictive factors. There is not enough evidence in these studies to indicate i) which factors are the most important, and ii) how the direction and interplay of multiple risk factors with victimisation can be identified (Krug et al. 2002). With most ‘risk factors’ or correlates, the causal relationship cannot be established. Risk factors or correlates, which have been found so far, thus should be treated cautiously and cannot be assumed to be complete (ibid.).

Which factors are correlated with the increased violence experienced by migrant women, particularly in relation to the increased violence affecting different generations of Turkish migrant women? Is this primarily a case of increased risks resulting from difficult social and economic conditions, and discrimination experienced/faced by migrants in Germany? To what extent are gender-specific power-relations and gender-equal task-sharing within the partner relationship relevant? These questions were examined in the multivariate analyses. Overall, it was found that the migrant women more often had disadvantaged social situations; they frequently lacked educational and financial resources, had limited knowledge of the German language, held in some cases more traditional values, but also lacked awareness of support facilities. This, in turn, all complicates women’s attempts at breaking out of a violent and abusive relationship and increases the risk of severe violence. Most of all, violence experienced by women in their families of origin, especially violence between parents, was an important factor for the victimisation of women in later adult life.



## Socioeconomic and educational resources

Although suggested in some studies, no simple educational and social class correlation with regard to domestic violence was found for the whole population in either the initial or further analyses of the 2004 German prevalence study. With respect to the severity levels and patterns of violence, women with lower levels of education and income are not generally more affected by severe abuse than women with higher education or a privileged social situation. However, analyses of risk factors for migrant and ethnic minority women affected by severe partner violence showed that a higher level of education and socio-economic status, having an independent income and occupation appear to be protective factors for migrant women.

### Education

More highly educated Turkish origin women experienced significantly lower rates of severe physical and sexual partner violence than less educated Turkish women. For highly educated women, the rates of partner violence are comparable to German women. Yet, almost all women of Turkish origin who reported physical or sexual violence by their current partner had no accredited professional training or higher education. The role of education cannot be disregarded: while in itself it cannot protect women from partner violence, it is vital for empowering women to leave violent relationships because it helps them to gather and understand information about violence and support institutions, and consequently gain control over their world (Kishor 2000 as cited by Kishor and Johnson 2004: 31).

### Employment and professional status

Employment and occupational status were relevant protective factors especially for women of Turkish origin with respect to severe grades and patterns of partner violence. Employed women of Turkish origin were, in contrast to migrant women from the former SU, less frequently affected by psychological, physical and sexual violence and severe patterns of abuse by intimate partners than unemployed women of Turkish origin. A low professional status heightened the risk for Turkish women of severe forms of current partner violence, while women from the former SU were at higher risk when they had a middle or high professional status. Thus, these results partly support previous studies which showed that working women might be at increased risk of partner violence under certain circumstances (Yilmaz and Battegay 1997; Kishor and Johnson 2004). For women from the former Soviet Union (SU) countries, whose men were often unemployed in the migra-

tion context, the women's employment status might be perceived as a threat or a loss of power, often accompanied by higher alcohol consumption and to some extent by violence towards the partner. But for Turkish women the results rather confirm studies which have found a correlation between unemployment of women and partner violence (Coker et al. 2000; Richardson et al. 2002; Vest et al. 2002; Walby and Allen 2004).

Male status, occupational/economic resources and the related dynamics within the couple relationship, varied depending on the (sub)cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds and were found to affect domestic violence in different ways. In the German majority population similar contradictory mechanisms were found as the two groups who were most affected by partner violence were women under 35 with no education and no social resources on the one hand, and women over 45 with higher incomes, higher education and higher occupational status on the other hand. Unemployment of male partners was discovered to be a factor that heightened the risk for violence against women, independently of their cultural or ethnic background: here the prevalence rates were equally high in all examined groups and no group differences emerged. As Jewkes (2002) has pointed out, 'Violence is frequently used to resolve a crisis of male identity' (ibid.: 1423). Although this underlines male unemployment as being a violence-promoting factor, it cannot be the single causal factor because the majority of violent male partners of women from the German survey were not unemployed nor did they hold subordinate job positions.

### Income and social position

Low household net income (or when partly or fully dependent on state benefits) and a marginal household or personal income was highly correlated with domestic violence but only for *migrant* women within the survey. Low monthly household net income was found to increase the risk of partner violence, particularly among younger second generation migrant women of Turkish origin. This finding confirms previous studies which have also found a similar association (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1994; McCauley et al. 1995; Dearwater et al. 1998; Coker et al. 2000; Sahin and Sahin 2003; Malcoe et al. 2004; Walby and Allen 2004) but it must be stressed that these correlations are not significant for the whole survey sample.

The direction of causality between violence and income is not clear: it is possible that poverty precedes partner violence or vice versa, since divorce or separation often means that women become poorer (Kishor and Johnson 2004: 27). As maintained by İlkkaracan (1996: 5–6), Turkish women who had faced partner violence were often quick to give up legal procedures in-

volving the payment of alimony to avoid future threats and pressures or because they did not know their rights due to language problems. This can also contribute to the lower socio-economic status of women affected by intimate partner violence.

### **Traditional gender relations/gender relationships and male dominance**

Male dominance in the relationship increased the risk of (severe) partner violence for all women irrespective of their origin. However, women of Turkish origin more often described their current partners as very dominant, though migrant women from the former SU also reported this. Male dominance in relationships was found to be a relevant factor in all population groups but is especially significant for partners of migrant women; yet most partners of migrant women (independently of their country of origin) do not display male dominance within relationships. Male dominance in intimate relationships is found to be a risk factor, but also a consequence of violence in intimate relationships, thus the direction of causality cannot be determined due to lack of longitudinal studies.

### **Divorce and separation**

As observed in social work and police practice for many years, the post-separation and divorce situation pose a high risk for all women with regard to severe violence by the current or former partner. This was also confirmed in the findings of the German survey: being divorced or separated was found to be significantly correlated with the experience of lifetime partner violence. Separated/divorced women of the whole sample population (with and without migration background) were three to five times more likely to have experienced partner violence than women who were not divorced/separated. This result is also in line with several studies and national prevalence surveys, which have identified being divorced or separated to be highly associated with partner violence (Martinez and Schröttle et al. 2006b; Bureau of Justice Statistics 1994; McCauley et al. 1995; Coker et al. 2000; Richardson et al. 2002; Vest et al. 2002; Walby and Allen 2004; Watson and Parsons 2005; Hyman et al. 2006).

Although separation is correlated with violence for all women, for women with a Turkish migration background this risk is considerably higher: separated/divorced women of Turkish origin were more than six times more

likely to have experienced partner violence when compared to married women, and more than four times more likely than single/widowed women (Khelaifat 2007). When stratified by age, it was ascertained that women under 35 of Turkish origin had an almost fifteen-fold risk of partner violence when compared to their married counterparts, and an almost tenfold risk when compared to their single/widowed counterparts.<sup>7</sup> When these women separated from their partners, they stated significantly more frequently than other respondent groups having experienced threatening or violent (stalking) acts and, furthermore, having been exposed to higher rates of violence and threats regarding the joint custody of children. Overall, the data shows that about one third of the women with a Turkish migration background were eminently at risk of becoming a victim of violence by their previous partners during separation or divorce. This applies to one in seven women from former SU countries, and one in ten women of German origin (Schröttle and Ansoerge 2008). This increased risk of encountering violence makes separation for some groups of migrants even more hazardous.

### Language skills, duration of stay in Germany and social integration of the women

Poor German language skills in both migrant groups were found to correlate with physical and sexual assaults by partners. For migrant women who had lived less than ten years in Germany, the duration of stay was not related to violence by current partners. Additionally, there was no significant correlation between German born and other migrant women. Fewer social contacts, or not feeling socially integrated, were correlated with partner violence for all women irrespective of their origin. Both groups of migrants were significantly less embedded in social relations than women of German origin. About one quarter of migrants of both populations were socially integrated to a low degree compared to 7% of women of German origin in current partner relationships. Twice as many women of German origin as women with a migration background were highly socially integrated (41% vs. 19–20%). Nevertheless, compared to the other respondents groups, Turkish migrants experienced extensive occurrences of violence, and this was found even when there was increased social integration. There is speculation that stronger involvement in traditional family structures might hinder some migrant women leaving violent partners and this may also be a related factor.

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7 However, this result should be treated cautiously as the sample size was very small.

The causality of the association between low social contacts and partner violence cannot be established here. It is possible that low levels of social contacts make Turkish and other migrant women more vulnerable to partner violence. Nevertheless, partner violence has also been found to decrease social contacts because abusive partners may restrict and control women's social interactions to prevent detection, and women might withdraw from sources of help and support due to feelings of shame (Smith, Tessaro and Earp 1995: 173–174). However, without social contacts, abused women are trapped in their relationships because they lack much needed support, advice and help to leave. Social contacts in migrant communities might not be helpful *per se*. Some migrant communities pressure women to remain silent when they encounter partner violence (Bhuyan and Senturia 2005: 897). In these communities, violence is excused on grounds of tradition, love or honour, and the group norms are considered to be superior to a woman's individual needs. In addition, when women do not adhere to group norms, pressure, isolation and even violence can be sanctioned (İllkkaracan 1996: 5).

## Violence in childhood and youth

Childhood experiences of violence seem to be the most powerful risk factor for violence against women in couple relationships according to this study and several other national surveys worldwide (Schrötle and Ansoorge 2009; Martinez and Schrötle et al. 2006: 30f; Straus and Yodanis 1996; Coker et al. 2000; Jewkes et al. 2002; Kishor and Johnson 2004; Watson and Parsons 2005). Women who had experienced violence during childhood and adolescence in the German study had, independently of migration/national background, a two to threefold risk of suffering partner violence in later life; women, who had been sexually abused before their 15th birthday, had a fourfold risk of suffering sexual abuse in adult life. Three quarters of women affected by patterns of severe violence in current relationships had experienced physical, sexual and/or psychological assaults during childhood or adolescence. This has an immense impact on their psychological and physical health, which calls for continuing support (beyond an acute violent situation) for women (and their children) independently of their social and migration background.

When not confronted with violence during their childhood and youth, women with and without a migration background experienced physical/sexual violence and severe patterns of violence by intimate partners less often. In comparison, migrant women in the German survey had not reported significantly higher rates of violence during their childhood and youth with re-

spect to parental physical and mental violence, as well as sexual assaults during childhood and youth. The only difference was found with respect to witnessing violence between parents which was reported by women of Turkish origin significantly more often. Witnessing violence between parents was significantly correlated with physical/sexual intimate partner violence. If no violence between parents was witnessed by women, no significant differences emerged any more between the different groups of women with and without migration background. Overall, the above results emphasise the vital role for raising awareness of the intergenerational transmission of violence within prevention programmes directed at all women and men regardless of their ethnic origin.

### Health factors, violence and migration background

Indicators for the negative health consequences of VAW have been established in several national and international studies since the 1990s<sup>8</sup>. In the German survey, as in other European prevalence surveys on VAW, two sources were used in order to examine health impact on VAW: on the one hand questions on the current physical and psychological health status were included and results correlated with different forms of victimisation through violence (here confounding factors for the current health status like age, social and economic situation are controlled); on the other hand the direct impact of violence perceived by the women were investigated (Martinez and Schröttle et al. 2007). The results from the German survey, in line with other studies, found strong correlations of VAW with psychosomatic health complaints such as: head and stomach aches, gastro-intestinal complaints, cerebral problems, dizziness, respiratory complaints, circulatory problems, skin conditions, abdominal pains, menstrual problems and other gynaecological complaints. Several psychological problems were also quoted significantly more frequently by those affected by violence, especially stress symptoms, sleeping disturbances, feeling low, depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety and panic attacks, reduced working performance and eating disorders (Schröttle/Hornberg/Bohne et al. 2008; Schröttle and Khelaifat 2008). Furthermore, victims of violence had nearly twice as many complications during pregnancy or childbirth.

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8 For an overview of international results, see Schröttle, Hornberg and Bohne et al. 2008 and for methodological considerations, Martinez and Schröttle et al. 2006 b, 2007, see also Krug et al. 2002

Interestingly, the German study found in parallel that not only a less positive self-assessment of current health was particularly evident especially among Turkish migrants above 45 years, but also that several of the above stated health and psychological complaints were reported more often by migrants, especially by Turkish origin migrants of the elder generation (e.g. headaches or stomach aches, gastrointestinal complaints, stress symptoms, cerebral problems gynaecological symptoms, anxiety, panic attacks, sleep disturbance and suicidal thoughts). Thus, as violent assaults, as well as health problems, were identified to be more frequent in women of Turkish origin, the hypothesis was tested by multivariate statistical analysis, whether and to what extent the worse health situation of specific groups of women migrants was related to their experiences of violence.

It was found that the greater health burden of Turkish origin migrant women was not solely or predominantly due to their increased affectedness of violence, but was also linked to variables of their present life situations. The poor health situation reported by a proportion of women migrants, in particular women of Turkish origin in Germany, was mainly linked to the women's difficult social situation: here indirect influences are highly relevant such as the interconnected factors of education, income and social integration. Low educational and income status, a lack of social contacts, low social integration, and insecure or poor working conditions were found to be the main factors influencing Turkish migrant women's health status. Thus, the health situation of these women is compromised not only by a higher prevalence of violence, but to high extent by additional social and economic factors, including social discrimination. Vice versa, the problematic health and social situations of relevant groups of women migrants may increase their vulnerability to intimate partner violence, consequently making it more difficult to leave violent (couple or family) relationships.

## Discussion of the results with respect to intervention, support and prevention

A considerable proportion of migrant women in Germany are affected by violence and health problems and find it difficult to leave abusive situations because they are undermined and impaired by social as well as psychological and interpersonal discrimination in German society. The findings associated with risk factors of violence, in this study, show that the violence faced by some of the migrant women living in Germany is similar in terms of violence-promoting conditions faced by women without a migration back-

ground. Yet, these conditions seem to be more frequent and more severely prevalent within certain migrant populations. Vocational and social support for women with or without a background of migration, particularly before and during the phase of starting a family, is a crucial precondition for improving women's health status and reducing the prevalence of violence. Economic and work security, plus psychosocial support in the context of separation and divorce are also vital in this context. This provides a direct and indirect positive influence on the health and violence situation of women, children and subsequent generations.

Several issues require further and parallel attention. Migrant women and men should be given specific and individual support regarding their professional and educational needs, factors of discrimination must be actively addressed, whilst raising awareness of gender equality in intimate relationships may be an additional important objective for family and partner relationships. However, it should be pointed out that discrimination of women and equality differences between genders continue to exist in wider German society, and the reduction of these problems should be a common project for all women and men, with and without a migration background. Improving social support in a way that addresses concrete needs and expectations is a key factor in preventing violence against migrant women. Thiara (2005: 4) asserts that migrant women 'require higher levels of support over a longer period of time' since they often face 'extreme isolation and also feelings of guilt due to thinking that they have failed both their families and their community'. She found that migrant women felt much more comfortable and positive about services when they were able to talk to women who had similar backgrounds and spoke their languages. Women from similar cultural backgrounds, in turn, could relate much better to the pressures and contradictions faced by abused migrant women and thus were in a better position to counter-act traditional views (Thiara 2005: 4). The provision of culture-sensitive support for Turkish migrant women could consequently facilitate the development of trustful working relationships, which would in turn help abused women to make informed choices (Thiara 2005: 4). Hence women with a background of migration require multilingual and culturally sensitive services for protection and support. This support must not only be built up for, but also, by women with a migration background.

24 hour telephone hotlines regarding partner violence offered in Turkish on a national basis within a national helpline that is just starting in Germany might be a further valuable intervention. To reach first generation women, or women aged 35 years and older with low social integration, it may be effective to design national strategies with Turkish immigrant communities as well as trans-national cooperation with Turkey (the government and Turkish



women's rights organisations). Among Turkish migrant communities in Germany, using the Turkish Television/broadcasting network and printed media might also be influential in addressing the issue of partner violence. Providing mother-tongue therapeutic and long-term offers of psychosocial support (e.g. continuing support after staying in a women's refuge) is urgently required due to the distinctive difficulties and stresses faced by migrant groups. This has not been sufficiently addressed, and the provision of a broad-range of services for traumatised women, including comprehensive support, crisis intervention and trauma therapy, is sparse. The study found that Turkish women seldom use support through therapy. This may be a language problem because therapy is not regularly available in different languages in Germany, but also a fear of stigmatisation as Turkish women are often not used to these kinds of services. When considering the serious adverse affects on physical and psychological wellbeing caused when violence was experienced or observed during childhood and adolescence, it is crucial to initiate longer term processes of stabilisation and recovery for affected women and their children. Serious action is required to terminate destructive cycles of violence and prevent transmission to future generations. Early prevention and intervention and a range of high quality support for women and children with and without migration background affected by violence are not a social 'luxury' for economically prosperous times. They are a social necessity when considering the human misery and resulting economic costs.

Specific support and safety measures for all affected groups, during and after separation, are required. Thus, violence prevention and intervention should be tailored to the needs of migrant women during and after separation and divorce. Furthermore, legal advocacy and assistance is probably essential according to İlkkaracan (1996: 4–5). Turkish origin women are faced with more problems when seeking their legal rights because i) they often do not know the German legislative system, ii) they often have problems understanding the language and iii) they have nowhere to stay after separation (İllkkaracan 1996). Moreover, they fear they will lose their children. In addition, some migrant women might still be dependent on their husbands regarding their residence permit. The current residence act in Germany, similar to that in other European countries, in forcing many women migrants to stay in violent relationships for several years, has to be criticised intensely and changed fundamentally in order to better protect women and their children. There are national (Lehmann 2002; Hagemann-White, Katenbrink and Rabe 2006: 24) and international (Bhuyan and Senturia 2005; Hague et al. 2006; Raj et al. 2004) recommendations to inform migrant women about their rights.

Nevertheless, discussions about violence against women should not only focus on the social problems of the abused migrant women and their situa-

tions at large, as these situations may vary greatly in reality as we can see from this and other studies presented in this Reader. Further studies with larger migrant populations are required to gain more insight into the occurrence and correlates of partner violence, whilst distinguishing between different groups of migrants. In addition, gender relations in mainstream German society (particularly in the middle and upper middle classes, where the German study found either high rates of violence that were hidden more easily) should be examined. The prevention of domestic violence and support of victims of violence is essential irrespective of their social or ethnic backgrounds whilst acknowledgment must be given to the different needs of women affected. Reducing violence in society, at the same time as increasing gender equality in education, the professions and economic life more generally, requires interlinked strategies, which address the interdependencies of gender, power, health and violence. This must be studied urgently and in greater detail, given the continued displacement of traditional gender roles affecting all women and men irrespective of their origin.

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